Twenty Delicious Recipes
Selected by Kerrygold

Favorite Food at Home

RACHEL ALLEN

kerrygold

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Rachel Allen

WILLIAM MORROW
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I dedicate this book to my husband, Isaac, whose love, wisdom and inspiration I could not live without

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Introduction

Around County Cork where we live, are lush, green pastures and small herds of grazing cows. The herds belong to small family farms, where the cows are so well-cared-for, they even have names. With loving attention and a natural diet of the best grass—it's no wonder Irish cows produce some of the best milk to make some of the yummiest butter and cheeses in the world.

When I travel to the States, I'm reassured to find the familiar Irish dairy products I use at home sold under the Kerrygold brand. I recommend using Kerrygold Butter for the recipes in this book. It's sinfully rich and exceptionally golden—you'll taste the difference in your cooking and baking.

For cheeses that give you an authentic taste of Ireland, there are many Kerrygold varieties, such as Dubliner, Ivernia and Blarney Castle, as well as aged, reserve and reduced-fat Cheddar. These are some of the cheeses I keep in my fridge and I know you will like them, too.

For whatever you cook—especially the simplest dishes in this cookbook—it's important to use quality ingredients to ensure good results. Start with dairy products from Ireland.

Enjoy!

Scrambled Eggs with Tomato, Chile and Cilantro

SERVES 2 / VEGETARIAN

I love this scrambled egg variation, which I first tasted in a restaurant looking out over Mexico City. It's full of protein (from the eggs) and antioxidants (from the cilantro), and is a great way to start the day. Of course, you can omit the chile for children; the cilantro still makes it special.

1 tbsp butter
1 ripe tomato, finely chopped
½–1 chile, deseeded and finely chopped (optional for children)
4 free-range eggs, best quality possible
3 tbsp milk
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the tomato and chile and cook for a few minutes until the tomato is just softening. Meanwhile, whisk the eggs with the milk and a pinch of salt and pepper. Add to the saucepan and stir gently until the egg is softly scrambled. Stir in the chopped cilantro and serve.

Broccoli Soup with Parmesan Toasts

SERVES 6-8 / VEGETARIAN

I adore this delicious and nutritious soup. It's great either for family suppers or for a dinner party. The soup can be frozen and the Parmesan toasts prepared in advance, then grilled at the last moment. Ideal if you need a meal in an instant.

FOR THE SOUP:

2 tbsp butter
2 potatoes, peeled and finely chopped
1 large onion, peeled and chopped
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 head of broccoli, with stalk
3½-4¼ c hot vegetable (or chicken) stock
¾ c heavy cream

FOR THE PARMESAN TOASTS:

8 slices good-quality white bread
3 oz Parmesan cheese, finely grated

Melt the butter in a medium to large saucepan, and add the potatoes and onion, salt and pepper. Cover with a piece of wax paper and sweat over a gentle heat for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, cut the broccoli florets from the stalk. Using a small knife, remove the outer layer of skin from the stalk and discard, then chop the stalk into ½-inch pieces. Add to the onion and potato, cover and sweat for a further 5 minutes.

Add the hot stock to the potatoes, onion and broccoli stalk, bring up to the boil, then add the chopped florets. Boil without the lid over a high heat for 4–5 minutes until soft, then add the cream. Remove from the heat, puree in a blender and season to taste.

To make the Parmesan toasts, toast the bread on both sides, sprinkle with grated Parmesan and pop under a hot grill or into a hot oven for 2 minutes or until the cheese melts. Cut the toast into fingers and serve on the side with the soup.

Asparagus with Easy Hollandaise Sauce

SERVES 4 AS A MAIN COURSE OR 8 AS A STARTER / VEGETARIAN

I love it when the first asparagus appears in the shops in late spring. These bright green spears are so delicious cooked simply in a little salted boiling water. There are few things much better than a big feast of asparagus and a divine bowl of homemade hollandaise sauce, mopped up with toasted bread and washed down with a glass of wine!

32 spears fresh green asparagus
4–8 slices good-quality white bread
Soft butter, for the toast

FOR THE HOLLANDAISE SAUCE:

2 egg yolks
8 tbsp (1 stick) butter, cubed
1–2 tsp lemon juice

To make the hollandaise sauce, place the egg yolks in a heatproof glass bowl. Heat the butter in a saucepan until foaming, then pour gradually onto the egg yolks, whisking all the time. Add the lemon juice to taste, then pour into a heatproof measuring cup. Half-fill a saucepan with hot water from the kettle and place the cup of hollandaise in the saucepan to keep warm. When the water cools, just put the saucepan on a gentle heat, but do not let the water boil too long or the sauce will scramble.

Keep the sauce warm while you are waiting to serve it; it will sit quite happily like this for a couple of hours.

Half-fill a saucepan with water, add a good pinch of salt and bring to the boil. While it is heating up, remove the woody ends from the asparagus spears by snapping off about 1½ inches of the bottom of the stalk. Discard the woody ends.

Cook the asparagus by dropping it into the boiling water, cover and bring back up to the boil. Remove the lid and boil, uncovered, for another 4–7 minutes until just cooked. While the asparagus is cooking, toast the bread and butter it. Remove the asparagus and place on the buttered toast. Drizzle with some of the hollandaise sauce and serve the rest in a pitcher on the table.

Spicy Salmon Cakes

SERVES 4-6

This foolproof recipe makes about 12 salmon cakes for a family supper. You can also use this recipe to make about 40 mini salmon cakes for small bites to serve with drinks for an informal party. They are absolutely delicious served with flavored mayonnaise and Tomato and Cucumber Salsa. Again, if your children do not eat spicy food, you can omit the chile or Tabasco.

3/4 lb filleted and skinned salmon, roughly chopped
4 tbsp (1/2 stick) butter
2–3 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
4 oz fresh white breadcrumbs
1 egg, whisked
2 tsp Dijon mustard
2 tbsp lemon juice
2 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro (you can chop the small stalks too)
6 scallions, chopped
2 tsp Worcestershire sauce
1–2 tsp Tabasco sauce or 1 deseeded and chopped chile (optional for children)
3-4 tbsp olive oil, for cooking

Combine all the ingredients except the olive oil in a food processor and whiz to combine. Taste for seasoning and add salt, pepper, and more lemon juice or Tabasco, if necessary. If you do not have a food processor, chop up the salmon as finely as possible and mix together all the ingredients in a bowl. Shape into 3-inch patties or 1½-inch diameter patties for mini salmon cakes. Pan-fry in 3–4 tablespoons olive oil on a medium heat for 3–4 minutes on each side (2-3 minutes for mini cakes), or until golden. Serve on warm plates.

VARIATION

This is also delicious with a Mediterranean twist. Omit the Tabasco or chile and substitute the same amount of basil for the cilantro in the salmon cakes and serve with the mayonnaise and salsa.

Onion and Blue Cheese Tart

SERVES 6–8 / VEGETARIAN

Combined with a big green salad, this tart is perfect for an alfresco lunch in the garden. It is nice and easy to make, too, and there is no need to prebake the pastry.

FOR THE PASTRY:

2 c (9 oz) all-purpose flour
9 tbsp (1 stick plus 1 tbsp) butter
Pinch of salt
1 egg, beaten

FOR THE FILLING:

¼ c olive oil
3 very large onions, peeled and sliced
2 sprigs of fresh thyme or rosemary
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 oz blue cheese, crumbled roughly into ½-in pieces

Make the pastry following the method of Savory Shortcrust Pastry and allow it to rest in the fridge. Meanwhile, place the olive oil in a saucepan and add the sliced onions, herbs and salt and pepper. Stir, put on the lid and cook over a low heat for about 20 minutes, stirring regularly, until the onions are soft and tender. Discard the herb sprigs and pour out onto a plate to cool.

Roll out the chilled pastry between two sheets of plastic wrap. When it is big enough to line a 10-inch round tart pan, remove the top layer of plastic and flip the pastry into the pan with the remaining sheet of plastic on top. Press it into the edges of the pan, remove the plastic and trim the edges. Using a fork, prick holes into the base of the pastry shell. If you have time, it is best to allow the pastry to cool again before it goes into the oven to cook, so pop it into the freezer for 5 minutes if possible.

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Place a baking sheet in the oven to heat up (this will help the base of the tart cook more evenly).

Pour the onions into the chilled pastry shell, place on the hot baking sheet in the oven and cook for 25–35 minutes until the pastry around the edge is crisp and golden. About 3 minutes before the end of the cooking time, sprinkle the tart with the crumbled blue cheese and pop back into the oven for another 3 minutes. The blue cheese will just begin to melt. Remove the tart from the oven and allow to cool slightly before sliding out onto a serving plate.

Homemade Pork Sausages with Colcannon and Applesauce

SERVES 4 (MAKES ABOUT 12)

For me there is nothing quite so comforting as bangers and mash—sausages and mashed potatoes—and these homemade sausages are ever so tasty and easy to make. They have no casing so are made in a flash, and are great for children and adults alike. Colcannon, which is a traditional Halloween-time Irish mashed potato with cabbage, is perfect winter food. I also love to serve this colcannon with Pork Chops with Caramelized Apples.

FOR THE SAUSAGES:

1 lb fatty ground pork
2 oz fresh breadcrumbs
1 egg, whisked
1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed
1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley or marjoram
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 tbsp olive or sunflower oil

FOR THE COLCANNON:

3 lb floury potatoes, scrubbed
8 tbsp (1 stick) butter
1 lb green cabbage, outer leaves removed
2 tbsp water
1 c hot milk
2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

FOR THE APPLESAUCE:

1 large cooking apple (12 oz), peeled, cored and roughly chopped
1 tbsp water
2-4 tbsp (1–2 oz) superfine sugar

For the sausages, mix together all the ingredients except the olive oil, and season with salt and pepper. Fry a tiny bit of the mixture in a pan with a little olive or sunflower oil to see if the seasoning is good.

Divide the mixture into 12 pieces and shape each one into a sausage. Place on a baking sheet or plate and set aside until you want to cook them. (Chilling them for a day in the fridge is fine, or you can freeze them.)

To make the colcannon, cook the potatoes in boiling salted water until tender, draining three-quarters of the water after 5–10 minutes and continuing to cook over a low heat. Avoid stabbing the potatoes with a knife as this will make them break up. When cooked, drain all the remaining water, peel and mash with

4 tablespoons of the butter while hot. I usually hold the potato on a fork and peel with a knife if it is hot.

Meanwhile, cook the cabbage. Cut the cabbage into quarters, then cut out the core. Slice the cabbage finely across the grain. Heat a saucepan, add 2 tablespoons of the butter, the water and the sliced cabbage. Toss over a medium heat for 5–7 minutes, until just cooked. Add to the potatoes, then add the hot milk and the parsley, keeping some of the milk back in case you do not need it all. Season to taste and beat until creamy and smooth, adding more milk if necessary. Serve piping hot with the remaining butter melting in the center.

To make the applesauce, place the apple in a small saucepan with the water. Put the lid on and cook over a gentle heat (stir every now and then) until the apple has broken down to a mush. Add sugar to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.

To cook the sausages, heat a frying pan on a low to medium heat, add 2 tablespoons of olive or sunflower oil and gently fry the sausages for 12–15 minutes, until golden on all sides and cooked on the inside. Serve with the colcannon and applesauce.

RACHEL'S HANDY TIP

To make breadcrumbs, just put a slice of slightly stale bread (with or without crusts) in a food processor or blender and whiz.

VARIATIONS

The sausage mixture is also delicious shaped into little balls and used instead of the ground beef for Meatballs with Fresh Tomato Sauce.

SPICY SAUSAGES WITH CILANTRO

Replace the herbs with 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, and add half a deseeded, chopped red chile or a pinch of dried chile flakes and serve with sweet chili sauce.

Pork Chops with Caramelized Apples

SERVES 6

I love this combination of flavors: pork and apples—and cooked like this, they make a perfect supper or big lunch.

2–3 small pork chops per person
Olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE CARAMELIZED APPLES:
2 tbsp butter
3 eating apples, peeled, cored and cut into slices 1/4 in thick
2 tbsp sugar
Juice of 1/2 lemon

Drizzle the chops with a little olive oil and black pepper. Leave to sit in the fridge until you need to cook them—all day is fine.

Preheat the oven to 375°F (190°C). Place a baking sheet in the oven to heat up.

To prepare the caramelized apples, heat the butter in a frying pan. Add the apples and the sugar and toss on the heat for 4–5 minutes until cooked and golden. Squeeze in the lemon juice and keep warm.

Heat a frying pan until very hot, then cook the chops in batches, on both sides until golden. Sprinkle with salt, then pop them onto the hot baking sheet in the oven and cook for another 5–10 minutes or until cooked through.

Serve the pork chops with the caramelized apples.

Steak with Blue Cheese Butter and Walnut Salad

SERVES 2

This is serious comfort food and takes only 5 minutes to prepare, which is perfect for those times when you have just come home from work and need some real food fast!

FOR THE STEAKS:

2 sirloin or ribeye steaks, approx 6-8 oz each, excess fat removed
A drizzle of olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE BLUE CHEESE BUTTER:

1 oz blue cheese, rind removed
2 tbsp butter
Freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE SALAD:

2 handfuls of a mixture of watercress, arugula and baby spinach
A drizzle of olive oil (about 1 tbsp)
A small squeeze of lemon juice (about 1/2–1 tsp)
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 tbsp chopped walnuts, tossed over the heat in a dry pan until golden

Place the pan for the steaks on the heat. Drizzle the steaks with olive oil and sprinkle with black pepper, then allow to sit while the pan heats up.

To make the blue cheese butter, mash together the blue cheese and the butter in a bowl. Add some black pepper, then form into a log and wrap in plastic. Pop in the fridge to cool, or the freezer if you have just a few minutes.

When the pan is very hot, sprinkle the steaks with sea salt and place in the pan. Cook until one side turns a deep golden color and is seared, then turn over and cook until they are how you like them, 1–2 minutes for rare, about 4 minutes for medium or 8–10 minutes on a lower heat (so they don't burn) for well done. The cooking times will vary depending on the thickness of the steaks and the heat of the pan. When the steaks are cooked, take them off the heat and allow to rest while you toss the salad leaves with the olive oil, lemon juice, sea salt and pepper. Put the steaks on warm plates and top with slices of blue cheese butter. Serve with the dressed leaves sprinkled with chopped walnuts.

Macaroni and Cheese

SERVES 6–8 / VEGETARIAN

Macaroni and cheese must be the ultimate cure-all for adults and children alike. You can also add small pieces of cooked ham or bacon to the sauce. Macaroni and cheese can be made in advance and then reheated when you are ready to serve.

6 tbsp (3/4 stick) butter
1 onion, peeled and chopped
3/4 c (3 oz) all-purpose flour
3 3/4 c boiling milk
1–2 tsp Dijon mustard
8 oz cheese (Cheddar, or, even better, half Cheddar and half Gruyère), grated
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
11 oz elbow macaroni

Melt the butter in a saucepan, add the chopped onion and cook gently until soft. Stir in the flour and cook for a minute, then gradually add the milk, whisking all the time, and the mustard. Whisk in three-quarters of the cheese and allow to melt into the sauce, then season to taste with salt and pepper.

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling water with a teaspoon of salt, until just soft. Drain, then toss into the cheese sauce and transfer to a gratin dish about 10 inches square. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese and pop under a broiler for a few minutes to brown the cheese on top, or if you wish, put this aside for later. To reheat, put the dish in an oven preheated to 400°F (200°C) for about 25 minutes, or until golden and bubbling.

Asparagus and Scallion Tart

SERVES 6-8 / VEGETARIAN

This is one of the very best savory tarts and it is perfect in the late spring/early summer when asparagus is in season. It is light and delicate in flavor, and has a wonderful crisp shortcrust pastry base.

10-in Shortcrust Pastry shell, baked blind
1 tbsp olive oil
7 oz scallions, trimmed and finely sliced or chopped
7 oz asparagus spears, trimmed
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
4 eggs
1½ c heavy cream
1 oz Parmesan cheese, finely grated

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). To make the tart filling, heat the olive oil in a small saucepan, add the scallions and cook over a low heat until soft. Cook the asparagus by dropping it into boiling water with a pinch of salt, cover and bring back up to the boil, then remove the lid and boil, uncovered, for 3–4 minutes until it is just cooked. Drain, and then slice the asparagus into 1½-inch pieces, at an angle.

Whisk the eggs in a bowl, add the cream and the cooked scallions and season. Pour this filling into the cooked pastry shell, still in the pan. Drop the asparagus into the tart and sprinkle the grated Parmesan cheese over the top. Carefully place the tart into the preheated oven and cook for 20–30 minutes, or until the tart is just set in the center. Remove from the oven, and serve out of the pan, hot or at room temperature.

Quesadillas

MAKES 8 WEDGES / VEGETARIAN

Quesadillas are essentially the Central American toasted cheese sandwich! We make many versions of it at home, depending on what is in the fridge. Our children love plain cheese quesadillas or quesadillas filled with chicken or a little spinach (very handy as you can sneak it in almost unnoticed to greens-wary little ones). These are perfect for a snack or TV supper, and they are great for grown-ups too. I quite often have guacamole and tomato salsa with mine, as they do in Mexico. Not all children like chile, but one of our boys actually likes it, so I sometimes leave it in for him.

2 wheat flour tortillas
4 oz cheese (I like a mixture of Cheddar, Gruyère and mozzarella), grated
1 scallion, trimmed and sliced (optional)
½ green or red chile, deseeded and chopped finely (optional—chiles can be very hot!)

Heat a frying pan slightly. Place one tortilla in the pan and sprinkle with all the grated cheese, the sliced scallion and chile, if using. Cover with the other tortilla and press down with a spatula or your hands. The cheese will have started melting at this stage and the tortilla on the bottom should be golden brown. When it is, carefully turn it over and then cook the other side for another couple of minutes, until it is golden and all the cheese has melted. Transfer to a board and cut into wedges. Serve immediately on its own or with Crème Fraîche with Sweet Chili or Tomato and Cucumber Salsa.

VARIATIONS

QUESADILLAS WITH CHICKEN

Make as for the basic quesadillas, but add 3 oz shredded cooked chicken with the grated cheese.

QUESADILLAS WITH SPINACH

Make as for the basic quesadillas, but add one handful of baby spinach leaves (½ oz) with the grated cheese.

Toffee Sundae

MAKES 2 1/4 CUPS SAUCE / VEGETARIAN

My boys and I all love making sundaes. They're a serious treat! The toffee sauce is the best ever, and keeps for months in the fridge. It's especially delicious for drizzling over ice cream. This recipe makes quite a lot, but since it keeps for so long it's great to have some just waiting for an excuse to be used up.

FOR THE TOFFEE SAUCE:

8 tbsp (1 stick) butter
3/4 c (6 oz) light brown sugar
1/2 c (4 oz) superfine sugar
1 1/4 c corn syrup
1 c light cream
1/2 tsp vanilla extract

FOR THE SUNDAE:

1 tub vanilla ice cream

For the toffee sauce, put all the ingredients into a saucepan, and boil for about 4–5 minutes, until the sauce is smooth, stirring regularly.

Place a scoop or two of vanilla ice cream in each bowl or glass. Drizzle over the warm toffee sauce.

Porter Cake

SERVES 10-12 / VEGETARIAN

This traditional Irish cake uses porter, such as Guinness, Beamish or Murphy's, and is a deliciously rich and moist fruit cake. Make it a few days in advance of the celebratory event (it's perfect for St. Patrick's Day) if you like, and it will improve even more!

3 2/3 c (1 lb) all-purpose flour
1 tsp grated or ground nutmeg
1 tsp pumpkin pie spice
1 tsp baking powder
Pinch of salt
16 tbsp (2 sticks) butter, softened
1 c (8 oz) light brown sugar
1 lb golden or regular raisins or a mixture of both
3 oz chopped candied peel
2 eggs
One 12-oz bottle of porter or stout

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line the sides and base of an 8-inch high-sided round cake pan (the sides should be about 2 3/4 inches high) with wax paper.

Sift the flour, nutmeg, pie spice, baking powder and salt into a bowl. Rub in the butter, then stir in the sugar, raisins and the candied peel.

Whisk the eggs in another bowl, add the porter or stout, then pour into the dry ingredients and mix well. Pour into the prepared pan and bake for about 2 hours in the preheated oven. If it starts to brown too quickly on top, cover it with foil or wax paper after about 1 hour. The cake is cooked when a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean. Allow it to sit in the pan for about 20 minutes before turning out and cooling on a wire rack.

Well & Good
ORGANIC
SUGAR (LIGHT)
MARRIAGE'S
ORGANIC

Lemon Cookies

MAKES ABOUT 25 / VEGETARIAN

These are incredibly simple and gorgeous cookies. Do make sure that the butter you use is nice and soft. The cookies can be cut into any kind of shape, such as hearts for Valentine's Day, numbers for a birthday party or little holly leaves or Christmas trees during the festive season.

1½ c (6 oz) all-purpose flour
Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
8 tbsp (1 stick) butter, softened
¼ c (2 oz) superfine sugar

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Put the flour and lemon zest into a mixing bowl, rub in the soft butter, add the sugar and bring the whole mixture together to form a stiff dough. Do not add any water.

Roll the dough out to a thickness of about ¼ inch and cut into shapes. Transfer carefully to a baking sheet and bake in the oven for 6–10 minutes until they are pale golden. Cool on a wire rack.

RACHEL'S HANDY TIP

I quite often roll out this dough between two sheets of plastic wrap, as I do for pastry. Chill the slightly flattened piece of dough before rolling out and then the butter does not stick to the plastic.

Sponge Cake with Rhubarb Cream

SERVES 6–8 / VEGETARIAN

This is a classic sponge cake, made all the more gorgeous with the rhubarb cream filling. Also try filling it with raspberry jam and whipped cream, sliced strawberries and whipped cream, or with fresh, hand-picked blackberries and cream. This is perfect for Father's or Mother's Day (that's a hint, boys!) or, of course, as a birthday cake.

FOR THE CAKE:

9 tbsp butter, softened
3/4 c (6 oz) superfine sugar
3 eggs
1 1/2 c (6 oz) all-purpose flour
1 tsp baking powder
1 tbsp milk
Confectioners' sugar or superfine sugar, for dusting

FOR THE RHUBARB CREAM:

4 oz rhubarb, trimmed and sliced
1/4 c (2 oz) sugar
1/4 c water
1/3 c heavy cream

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Grease and flour the sides of two 8-inch cake pans, and line the bases with discs of wax paper.

Cream the butter until soft, then gradually add the sugar, and beat until light and fluffy. Add the eggs one by one, beating well all the time. Sift the flour and baking powder, and stir in gently, then stir in the milk until just combined.

Divide the mixture between the two pans, hollowing it slightly in the center, so that it will be flat on top when cooked. Bake for 20–25 minutes, or until the center of the cake springs back when you push it gently. Turn out onto a wire rack and allow it to cool. (Place the cake that will become the top layer on its base so that the top isn't marked by the cooling rack.)

Meanwhile, place the sliced rhubarb, sugar and water in a saucepan, cover and cook over a gentle heat for about 10 minutes, until the rhubarb is soft. Take off the lid and boil while stirring until it is thick. Pour into a bowl and allow to cool. Whip the cream until it forms soft peaks, then fold in the rhubarb. Sandwich the cakes with the rhubarb cream and sprinkle with sifted confectioners' or superfine sugar.

Toffee, Apple and Almond Crumble

SERVES 12 / VEGETARIAN

This has to be one of my favorite desserts—it's completely divine. The toffee sauce keeps for months in the fridge—so handy for a quick sweet treat. It's great with ice cream and baked bananas too. I usually double this recipe, so that I have some left over to store in the fridge.

FOR THE TOFFEE SAUCE:

3/4 c corn syrup
1 c plus 2 tbsp (9 oz) light brown sugar
8 tbsp (1 stick) butter
3/4 c light cream
2 tsp vanilla extract

FOR THE CRUMBLE:

2 3/4 c (12 oz) self-rising flour
Finely grated zest of 2 lemons
10 tbsp butter, chopped or cubed
3/4 c (6 oz) light brown sugar
4 oz ground almonds

FOR THE FILLING:

12 eating apples, peeled, quartered, cored and cut into 3/4-in chunks
4 tbsp butter

TO SERVE:

Softly whipped cream, vanilla ice cream

Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Put all the ingredients for the toffee sauce into a saucepan over a medium heat and boil for 2–3 minutes, stirring regularly until smooth. Set aside.

Next, make the crumble topping. Place the flour and lemon zest in a bowl and rub in the butter, leaving it a little rough and uneven. Stir in the sugar and ground almonds. Place the crumble in the fridge until you are ready to use it.

Melt the 4 tablespoons butter in a wide saucepan or frying pan, add the chopped apples and toss on the heat for a few minutes until the apples start to soften. Add 1/2 cup of the toffee sauce (about half; keep the rest for serving) and continue to simmer for a few minutes longer, until the apples are just cooked.

Pour into two 9-inch pie dishes. Sprinkle the crumble over the top and place in the preheated oven for 20–30 minutes, or until the crumble is light golden and the toffee sauce juices bubble up the sides. Serve warm with softly whipped cream and a jug of the remaining warm toffee sauce.

White Soda Scones

MAKES ABOUT 12 SCONES / VEGETARIAN

This has to be one of the fastest and most delicious scones you can make. The dough is just perfect for children to play around with, even if it does then get heavy from overhandling. You should see some of the creations that my sons make; dinosaurs are their favorites! This is the soda bread mixture we make at the Ballymaloe Cookery School, and there are countless variations you can experiment with from this basic recipe.

3 2/3 c (1 lb) all-purpose flour
1 tsp salt
1 tsp baking soda
1 3/4 c buttermilk or sour milk

Preheat the oven to 450°F (230°C). Sift the flour, salt and baking soda into a large bowl, and rub the mixture with your fingertips to incorporate some air. Make a well in the center and pour in most of the buttermilk. Using one hand, with your fingers open and stiff, mix in a full circle, bringing the flour and liquid together, adding more liquid if necessary. The dough should be quite soft, but not too sticky.

Turn it out onto a floured surface, and do not knead it but gently bring it into one ball. Flatten it slightly to a height of about 1 1/2 inches. Cut the dough into squares or whatever shape you like. Put the scones onto a baking sheet, pop into the hot oven and cook for 10–15 minutes (depending on the size). Have a look at them after 10 minutes; if they are deep golden brown, then turn down the heat to 400°F (200°C) for the remainder of the time. When cooked they should sound hollow when tapped. Cool on a wire rack.

VARIATIONS

HERB SCONES

Add 1–2 tbsp of chopped fresh thyme, rosemary, parsley, chives, marjoram, savory or sage to the flour before you pour in the buttermilk. For even more flavor, you could sprinkle the tops with grated Cheddar cheese before they go into the oven.

PESTO SCONES

Add 1–2 tbsp basil pesto to the buttermilk before mixing with the flour. These are also delicious with chopped olives mixed in with the flour.

CRISPY BACON AND PARMESAN SCONES

Add about 1/3 cup chopped cooked crispy bacon, a good pinch of cayenne pepper and 2 oz finely grated Parmesan cheese to the flour at the start, then brush the tops of the raw scones with beaten egg or leftover buttermilk and sprinkle with more grated Parmesan cheese.

SWEET SCONES

Add 2 tbsp superfine sugar to the dry ingredients. Also, put 1 egg into a measuring cup, lightly beat and add buttermilk or sour milk to make 13/4 c. This makes the dough slightly richer. In addition, you could add any of the following ingredients to the flour at the start of the recipe: 4 oz golden raisins (or currants) and 1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice; 4 oz chopped chocolate; or 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon and an extra 2 tbsp sugar. Then brush the tops with beaten egg and dip into 1/4 c (2 oz) granulated sugar mixed with 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon.

2kg
4lb
1kg

PYREX
1 PINT
18
16
3/4 PINT
14
12
1/2 PINT
8
6
1/4 PINT
4
2 fl. oz.

Popcorn Paradise

SERVES 4 / VEGETARIAN

It is difficult to have a home-cinema night without popcorn, so why not try this recipe and all its variations? Serve the popcorn in a big bowl or in paper cornets for each person.

PLAIN POPCORN

3 tbsp sunflower oil
⅓ c popcorn kernels
2 tbsp butter
Pinch of salt

Heat the oil in a medium saucepan. Add the popcorn and swirl the pan to coat the popcorn in oil. Turn down the heat to low and cover; the corn should start to pop in a couple of minutes. As soon as it stops popping (after 5–7 minutes), take the saucepan off the heat and add the butter and salt. Put the lid back on the pan and shake to mix. Pour out into bowls and leave to cool a little.

VARIATIONS

TOFFEE POPCORN

Cook the popcorn as for the plain popcorn recipe, but while the corn is popping, make the toffee coating by melting 2 tablespoons butter in a small saucepan. Then add 2 tablespoons brown sugar and 1 generous tablespoon corn syrup and stir over a high heat for ½–1 minute until thick. Pour the toffee over the popcorn, put the lid on the pan and shake to mix. Pour out into bowls and cool a little before serving.

SPICED POPCORN

Cook the popcorn as for the plain popcorn recipe as far as removing the pan from the heat. In a bowl, mix 1½ teaspoons each of ground cumin and coriander seeds with ½ teaspoon each of medium-strength curry powder and ground paprika and ¾ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper. Heat 2 teaspoons sunflower oil in a frying pan, add the spices and stir for about 30 seconds until lightly toasted. Throw in 2 tablespoons superfine sugar and ¾ teaspoon salt, stir, then add all of this into the popped popcorn in the saucepan, toss and empty into a big bowl.

Lemon Curd

MAKES ONE 1-PINT JAR / VEGETARIAN

My aunt, Gay, gave me a lovely big jar full of the most delicious lemon curd for Christmas. It kept me going for weeks—spreading it on toast and drop scones, enjoying it with meringues and cream, and then finally making it into Lemon and Ginger Ice Cream. Delicious!

2 eggs
1 egg yolk
8 tbsp (1 stick) butter
3/4 c (6 oz) superfine sugar
Finely grated zest and juice of 3 lemons

Beat the whole eggs and extra egg yolk together. Melt the butter in a saucepan over a very low heat. Add the sugar, grated zest and lemon juice and then the beaten eggs. Stir carefully over a very gentle heat until the mixture thickens. This may take about 10 minutes. If the heat is too high, the eggs will scramble.

When the mixture is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon and leave a clear mark when you push your finger through it, the curd is ready.

Remove from the heat and pour into a sterilized jar. Allow to cool, then place in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

Savory Shortcrust Pastry

MAKES 1LB PASTRY / VEGETARIAN

This makes enough to line one 10- or 11-inch square pan (with a little left over), or two 8-inch round pans (it is best if they have removable bases). Uncooked pastry freezes perfectly, so it is handy to have some in the freezer. It will also keep in the fridge for a couple of days.

2 c (9 oz) all-purpose flour
9 tbsp (1 stick plus 1 tbsp) butter, diced and softened
½–1 egg, beaten

Place the flour and butter in a food processor. Whiz for a few seconds, then add half the beaten egg and continue whizzing. You might need to add a little more egg, but don't add too much—the pastry should just come together. (If making by hand, rub the butter into the flour, then use your hands to bring it together with the egg.) Flatten out the ball of dough to a thickness of about 1¼ inches, wrap or cover with plastic, and place in the fridge for at least 30 minutes.

When you are ready to roll the pastry, remove from the fridge. Place the pastry between two sheets of plastic, which should be bigger than your tart pan. Using a rolling pin, roll it out until it is no thicker than ⅛ inch. Make sure to keep it round, if the pan is round, and large enough to line the base and sides of the pan.

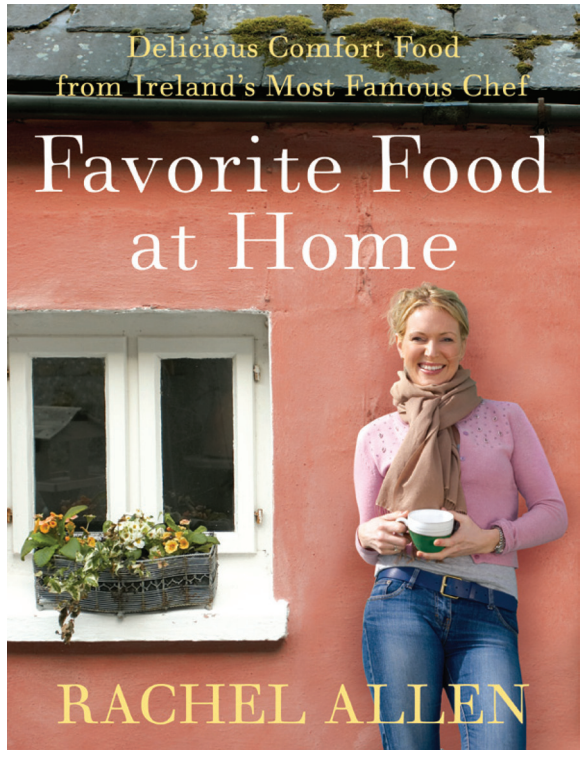
Removing the top layer of plastic wrap, place the pastry upside-down (plastic facing up) in the tart pan. Press into the edges, plastic attached and, using your thumb, "cut" the pastry on the edge of the pan to give a neat finish. Remove the plastic and pop the pastry in the freezer for at least 10 minutes.

BLIND BAKING

Blind baking is a way of partially cooking a pastry shell before adding its filling. Preheat the oven to 350°F (180°C). Line the pastry with wax paper when cold (leaving plenty to come up the sides), fill with pie weights or dried beans (you can use these over and over), and bake for 15–20 minutes, until the pastry feels dry. Remove the paper and beans, brush with a little leftover beaten egg and return to the oven for 2 minutes. Take out of the oven and put to one side while you prepare the filling. This can be easily made a day in advance.

"THE IRISH COOKING QUEEN" —BBC

We hope you enjoyed this selection of recipes from Rachel Allen's Favorite Food at Home. If you'd like more recipes, pick up a copy of the complete book, available wherever books are sold.



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